

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 10665

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, PINR, IT
SUBJECT: THE ANDREOTTI VISIT; PART II, PROFILE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

1. PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI HAS LIVED UP TO HIS REPUTATION AS ONE OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT (DC) PARTY'S MOST SKILLED POLITICAL MANEUVERERS AND NEGOTIATORS, NOT ONLY SURVIVING BUT EVEN PROSPERING IN AN EXCEEDINGLY FRAGILE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT. FOR NEARLY A YEAR, HE HAS HEADED A DC-MINORITY GOVERNMENT THAT IS TECHNICALLY AT THE MERCY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY (WHICH PROVIDES "SUPPORT" BY ABSTENTION). HOWEVER, ANDREOTTI HAS PLAYED TO HIS ADVANTAGE THE LACK OF ANOTHER WORKABLE ALTERNATIVE TO HIS GOVERNMENT, AND HE HAS BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE GREATER PROGRESS IN INITIATING AN ECONOMIC STABILIZATION PROGRAM THAN MOST WOULD HAVE THOUGHT POSSIBLE.

2. ANDREOTTI HAS OPERATED PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVELY IN THIS SITUATION BECAUSE, MORE THAN ANY OTHER DC LEADER, HE IS A MAN OF GOVERNMENT. FOR VIRTUALLY HIS ENTIRE POLITICAL CAREER, SPANNING THREE DECADES OF ITALIAN HISTORY, ANDREOTTI HAS BEEN IN GOVERNMENT IN ONE FORM OR ANOTHER. AS A PROTEGE OF THE POSTWAR DC LEADER DE GASPARI, ANDREOTTI BECAME AN UNDERSECRETARY IN 1947 AT THE AGE
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OF 28. SINCE THEN HE HAS HELD NEARLY EVERY IMPORTANT GOVERNMENT PORTFOLIO (NOTABLY DEFENSE AND INTERIOR) WITH THE CURIOUS EXCEPTION OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. IN SHORT, THERE ARE FEW ITALIAN POLITICIANS SO WELL VERSED IN THE INTRICACIES OF ITALY'S ELEPHANTINE BUREAUCRACY AND THE INNER WORKINGS OF THE COUNTRY'S POLITICIZED STATE ENTERPRISES. THERE ARE FEW ITALIAN LEADERS WHO ARE SO

KNOWLEDGEABLE AND CURRENT ON SUCH A WIDE RANGE OF COMPLEX ISSUES--BE THEY NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION, DEFENSE POLICY, THE BUDGET, OR EDUCATION REFORM. UNFLAPPABLE, SHREWD AND TOUGH, ANDREOTTI IS THAT SUPERBUREAUCRAT WHO GETS HIS WAY THROUGH A COMBINATION OF HARD WORK, MASTERY OVER DETAIL, PRAGMATIC BRILLIANCE IN TIMING AND APPROACH, AND KNOWING WHERE THE BODIES ARE BURIED.

3. PALE, STOOPED AND PHYSICALLY AWKWARD, ANDREOTTI IS BY NO MEANS A CHARISMATIC POLITICIAN. ON THE OTHER HAD, BOTH THE PUBLIC AND THE ITALIAN POLITICAL CLASS HAVE ALWAYS LISTENED TO ANDREOTTI WITH RESPECT. HE IS THEIR VOICE OF REASON, TEMPERED BY A FINE SENSE OF IRONIC HUMOR THAT BORDERS ON CYNICISM. HEADING THE MINORITY GOVERNMENT IN A TIME OF INFLATION AND SPIRALLING VIOLENCE, ANDREOTTI HAS BEEN MARKEDLY SUCCESSFUL IN PROJECTING A POSITIVE IMAGE OF SERIOUSNESS OF PURPOSE, DEDICATION, AND COMPETENCE. HE HAS UTILIZED THE ITALIAN MEDIA JUDICIOUSLY TO EXPLAIN THE NEED FOR POLITICALLY UNPOPULAR AUSTERITY MEASURES. AND, UNLIKE VETERAN REPUBLICAN LEADER LA MALFA WHOSE CASSANDRAN VISIONS "TURN OFF" THE PUBLIC, ANDREOTTI WISELY SWEETENS HIS BLUNT TALK WITH A CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC VISION OF THE FUTURE. ALL THIS HAS DONE MUCH TO REFURBISH THE DC'S BATTERED IMAGE.

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4. THE DC, HOWEVER, HAS ALWAYS MAINTAINED A CERTAIN DISTANCE FROM ANDREOTTI. HE HAS NEVER BEEN A MAN OF THE PARTY, AND THIS, ON BALANCE, REMAINS ANDREOTTI'S GREATEST WEAKNESS. EVEN IF, WITH MORO, ANDREOTTI MUST NOW CLEARLY BE CONSIDERED ONE OF THE DC'S TWO MOST SENIOR LEADERS, HE WOULD HAVE GREAT DIFFICULTY IN TAKING CHARGE OF THE PARTY. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A BRIEF PERIOD AT THE END OF THE SIXTIES WHEN HE SERVED AS DC PARLIAMENTARY GROUP HEAD, ANDREOTTI HAS NEVER BEEN ENTRUSTED WITH HIGH PARTY POSITION. CATAPULTED TO PROMINENCE ON DE GASPARI'S COAT FLAPS (ALBEIT FOR HIS INTELLIGENCE AND ABILITY), ANDREOTTI NEVER BUILT UP A STRONG FACTIONAL POWER BASE. EVEN TODAY, ALTHOUGH ANDREOTTI COMMANDS A CERTAIN DEGREE OF AUTHORITY IN ROME AND LAZIO, THE PRIME MINISTER CAN COUNT ON FEW FACTIONAL ALLIES. IN FACT, THE SMALL ANDREOTTI FACTION HAS OFTEN COUNTED IN POLITICAL TERMS MORE AS A BRIDGE TO FACTIONAL GROUPS IN OTHER PARTIES (EG. THE SOCIALIST'S MANCINI WING) RATHER THAN FOR ITS WEIGHT WITHIN THE DC ITSELF.

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5. IT IS PRECISELY ANDREOTTI'S TIES WITH OTHER PARTIES AND HIS REPUTATION AS A PRAGMATIC MANEUVERER THAT EVOKE AMBIVALENT FEELINGS AND CONSIDERABLE MISTRUST WITHIN HIS PARTY. IN CONTRAST TO THE CLASSIC GENERATIONAL CHANGE THAT MOTIVATES POLITICAL LEADERS (SUCH AS FANFANI) TO SHIFT FROM THE LEFT TO THE RIGHT, ANDREOTTI BEGAN HIS POLITICAL CAREER AS A CONSERVATIVE, BUT OVER THE YEARS HAS PROGRESSIVELY MOVED TOWARD THE LEFT OF HIS PARTY'S POLITICAL SPECTRUM. WITHIN THE DC, HIS VIEWS ARE CURRENTLY CLOSEST TO THOSE HELD BY DC-LEFT LEADERS OF THE "BASE" FACTION. AS A RESULT, ANDREOTTI IS ONE OF THE FEW DC LEADERS WHO HAS BEEN ABLE TO RETAIN CONSERVATIVE TIES (HE IS REGARDED HIGHLY BY THE VATICAN) BUT WHO ALSO ENJOYS THE RESPECT AND TRUST OF PCI LEADERS. HIS SUPPORTERS SAY THAT HE IS PRAGMATIC; HIS DETRACTORS CALL HIM CYNICAL, AMBITIOUS, AND UNSCRUPULOUS.

6. WHILE ANDREOTTI IS COMMITTED TO DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND IS A FRIEND OF THE UNITED STATES, HE APPEARS MORE CONVINCED THAN MOST OTHER DC LEADERS OF THE NEED TO INVOLVE THE PCI DIRECTLY IN RESOLVING ITALY'S PRESSING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. HE HAS OFTEN POINTED OUT THAT IT WOULD BE FOOLISH NOT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF
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THE PCI'S "CONSTRUCTIVE" POSTURE. OVER TIME, HE BELIEVES

THE PCI MIGHT TRANSFORM ITSELF INTO AN AUTHENTIC DEMOCRATIC PARTY. UNTIL SUCH A TIME, HOWEVER, ANDREOTTI SEEMS CONVINCED THAT THERE ARE STILL SUFFICIENT GUARANTEES TO SAFEGUARD ITALIAN DEMOCRACY. HE HAS GIVEN NO INDICATION THAT HE WOULD ACCEPT PCI PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT AT THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL. HOWEVER, UNLIKE OTHER DC LEADERS, HE HAS NOT STATED THAT SUCH A DEVELOPMENT WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE WITHOUT A NEW CONSULTATION OF THE ELECTORATE. IN ITALIAN POLITICAL TERMS, ANDREOTTI IS REGARDED AS A "POSSIBILIST." YEARS AGO, INDRO MONTANELLI SAID OF HIM: "IN CHURCH, DE GASPARI CONVERSES WITH GOD; ANDREOTTI TALKS TO THE PRIEST." IT IS JUST THIS FASCINATION WITH THE PRACTICAL ARTS OF POLITICS AND POWER THAT MAKES ANDREOTTI'S DC COLLEAGUES UNEASY. FOR THESE REASONS, ANDREOTTI DOES NOT ALWAYS REFLECT THE MAINSTREAM OF DC THINKING. HE DOES NOT ENJOY THE CONFIDENCE OF SUBSTANTIAL NUMBERS OF HIS PARTY.

7. IT IS IMPORTANT, THEN, THAT ANDREOTTI'S WASHINGTON INTERLOCUTORS BEAR IN MIND THAT THE PRIME MINISTER, WHILE HE HAS DONE AN EFFECTIVE JOB IN MANAGING THE GOI DURING THE PAST CRISIS-RIDDEN YEAR, DOES NOT COME TO THE US AS HIS PARTY'S LEADER. THAT PLACE IS NOW UNQUESTIONABLY OCCUPIED BY ALDO MORO. ANDREOTTI, HOWEVER, COMES TO WASHINGTON IN JULY AS A VETERAN GOVERNMENT LEADER AND STATESMAN WHOSE BACKGROUND AND EXPERTISE HAVE MADE HIM EXCEPTIONALLY WELL QUALIFIED TO NAVIGATE AROUND THE PRECARIOUS SHOALS OF THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SCENE. A MAN WHO KNOWS THE UNITED STATES WELL, AN EXPERT ON PROBLEMS OF DEFENSE AND SECURITY, AND A CONSUMMATE POLITICIAN, ANDREOTTI IS, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND IS LIKELY TO REMAIN FOR SOME TIME, ONE OF THE DC'S MOST SENIOR LEADERS.GARDNER

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